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## LITERATURE.

STATEN ISLAND, a delightful suburb of New York, is fast becoming a literary center. George William Curtis has long made it his home, and Mrs. A. H. Leonowens has resided there since she came to America. The island boasts a poetess, also, in the person of Mrs. Laura Winthrop Johnson, a sister of the lamented Theodore Winthrop, who has given to the world a volume called "Poems of Twenty Years," sung "but for the love of singing." She says she "sang alone, nor cared, though none should know it:"

"But if the traveler, faltering on his way,  
Sees waters glimmer where the boughs are parted,  
And rests, and dreams, scarce listening to my lay,  
May he not grow a little lighter-hearted?"

Most of those who read this volume of "fancy," "experience," and the "war," for thus the poems are classified, will doubtless answer the question in the affirmative. Mrs. Johnson's poems cover a wide range of topics, and show her to be a woman who keeps abreast with the progress of the world, and is in tender and close sympathy with all that is beautiful, noble and true. Her pen is that of a ready writer, and her verses are smooth and rippling, full of color and melody. The following is a poem of fancy, entitled "The Four Elements:"

"Beethoven is the wind that sweeps at will,  
Sounding o'er forests and their waters lone,  
In frolic zephyrs playing soft and still,  
Then swelling weird and wild in awful tone.  
Great, strong, and searching all our spirits' depths;  
A fury of strange voice, that never sleeps.

Chopin is water; daring, changeable sea,  
And joyous brook, and softly shadowed lake;  
Rushing, and singing runes of mystery,  
With sobbing undersong, for shipwreck's sake.  
Now all tumultuous life, bewildering motion,  
Now glittering raindrops, falling on the ocean.

And Mozart is the gay, green living earth,  
Vocal with warbling bird and rustling leaf,  
With song and dance, and tender fitful mirth,  
And voice of man's full heart of joy and grief.  
In simple rapture soaring to the sky,  
Bringing sweet tears to every loving eye.

And Mendelssohn is fire, that fuses life,  
Devouring all, to make us live again,  
While from the ashes of our doubt and strife,  
He re-creates our hope through burning pain,  
And the keen passion of his harmony  
Bears us into the light of worlds to be!"

Many of the poems in this volume are pervaded with a deep religious feeling; others are full of patriotism and love of country, but generous withal. Mrs. Johnson writes so well, it is to be hoped she will live twenty years to come and give us another volume. A pretty love-song in this collection is called "Beware!"

"Beware of one who loves thee but too well!  
Of one who fain would bind thee with a spell  
Of power to draw thee, as an unknown land  
Lures the impassioned traveler to its strand!  
Oh, if thou wouldst be free,  
Beware of me!"

Beware of eyes that softly fix on thee,  
Tamed in their restless glances by thine own,  
And of a voice, where all things that may be  
In maiden hearts, is told in every tone;  
If thou wouldst still be free,  
Beware of me!"

But if a longing, born within thy soul,  
Gives thee a far-off gleam of unknown bliss,  
Then let thy love speed onward to its goal,  
Nor thy true rest and joy for blindness miss;  
If thou wouldst not be free,  
Then come to me!"

A study of contemporary fiction is interesting and profitable, showing, as it does, the public taste of the day for reading-matter, the drift of sentiment, and what those geniuses who write novels are capable of producing, if we admit that all authors are persons of genius. The press teems with works of fiction, more or less successful, a simple catalogue of which would fill the space at our command. The statistics of our public libraries, in Boston, as well as in Western cities, show that the books most extensively read are those of the least merit; trashy, sensational works, woven from feeble imaginations out of vapid and vicious materials. The great middle and lower class of American readers, outnumbering all others, delights in these curiosity and passion stimulating romances, which simply narrate commonplace or improbable events, with hardly a flash of intelligence, and not a single stroke of art. This deplorable lack of culture will remain until a higher and better education shall have lifted up the minds of the common people to that plane where only the truly beautiful and artistic shall have the power of pleasing.

As a work of genius, filled with passages of rare beauty and immense strength, Victor Hugo's "Ninety-Three" unquestionably stands at the head of the romances of the year, and it is a matter of congratulation that it has been translated into English and republished in this country in numerous cheap editions which place it within the reach of the poorest. The story is a historical narrative of the most terrible period of the French Revolution, chiefly valuable for the vivid pictures it contains of that great contest, the descriptions being so clearly wrought out that the reader follows with deep interest the fortunes of the Marquis de Lantenac, from the moment he landed on the coast of Brittany until he was set free from his dungeon by Gauvain. The tocsin of Breton sounds in the reader's ears, and he fights for the king, with the peasantry, the great battles of the woods over again; he follows the poor mother, who lost her three children, on her weary and footsore journey, until she has the horror and happiness of seeing them rescued from fire; he walks the streets of Paris, beholds the convention, sees Marat in the greenroom, and listens to the mighty conflict between him, Danton, Robespierre, and Cimourdain; he is present at the terrible siege of the tower of La Tourgue, the provincial bastille, and reads with emotion the great moral combat which takes place after the victory. Such a romance could only have been written by a man of genius, and must have had actual events for a foundation. That such stupendous struggles could have taken place proves that "there were giants in those days" in France, colossal heroes of

courage, justice, devotion to what appeared to be duty—to all the great emotions and principles which control human action. While some horrible and even disgusting things are written in "Ninety-Three," and the style is at times too epigrammatic, and too much of the catalogue is introduced into some of the chapters, these blemishes are but as spots on the sun compared with the healthy tone and high heroic action of the work as a whole. We doubt if anything more beautiful or natural in the annals of child-literature has ever been written than that section of "Ninety-Three" titled "The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew." One out of many beautiful passages is the following:

"The babble of an infant is more and less than speech; it is not measured, and yet it is a song; not syllables, and yet a language; a murmur that began in heaven and will not finish on earth; it commenced before human birth, and will continue in the sphere beyond! These lisps are the echo of what the child said when he was an angel, and of what he will say when he enters eternity. The cradle has a yesterday, just as the grave has a to-morrow; this morrow and this yesterday join their double mystery in that incomprehensible warbling, and there is no such proof of God, of eternity, and the quality of destiny, as in this awe-inspiring shadow flung across that flower-like soul."

The Marquis de Lantenac was a nobleman, a race which he describes as follows:

"It is an odd race; it believes in God, it believes in tradition; it believes in family, it believes in its ancestors, it believes in the example of its fathers, in fidelity, loyalty, duty toward its prince, respect to ancient laws, virtue, justice—and it would shoot you with pleasure."

"Ninety-Three" is a book to be read and enjoyed. It sparkles with gems, like the delicate hand of a fair woman. Here are a pair of emeralds:

"Nature is pitiless; she never withdraws her flowers, her music, her joyousness and her sunlight from before human cruelty and suffering. She overwhelms man by the contrast between divine beauty and social hideousness. She spares him nothing of her loveliness, neither butterfly nor bird. In the midst of murder, vengeance, barbarism, he must feel himself watched by holy things; he can not escape the immense reproach of universal nature and the implacable serenity of the sky. The deformity of human laws is forced to exhibit itself naked amidst the dazzling rays of eternal beauty. Man breaks and destroys; man lays waste; man kills; but the summer remains summer; the lily remains the lily; the star remains a star."

"Never had a morning dawned fresher and more glorious than this. A soft breeze stirred the heath, a warm haze rose amidst the branches; the forest of Fougères, permeated by the breath of hidden brooks, smoked in the dawn like a vast censer filled with perfumes; the blue of the firmament, the whiteness of the clouds, the transparency of the streams, the verdure, that harmonious gradation of color from aqua-marine to emerald, the groups of friendly trees, the mats of grass, the peaceful fields, all breathed that purity which is Nature's eternal counsel to man."

The stride from Victor Hugo to Edmund Yates is much greater than the width of the English Channel, and yet Mr. Yates, in a certain sense of the word, is a popular novel writer, both in England and America. His last romance is called "A Dangerous Game," and professes to be an American story, for its author once spent a few months in America, with the action mostly in New York, and incidentally in Liverpool and London. As a work of art it holds no place whatever by the side of "Ninety-Three;" as a narrative of events it is simply stimulating to the curiosity of those who have patience enough to follow the developments of the plot. There is not a fine or pretty passage in the whole book; no attempt at delineating character, describing scenery, or philosophizing. And there is nothing characteristically American in the story. The pith of the romance is the fact that a man falls in love with his friend's wife, makes the fact known to the woman, and then murders her husband to prevent discovery, and is, in turn, found out and executed. A mere record of crime with the usual efforts made to discover the perpetrator. Many well-known theatrical people have been introduced into the romance under the thin disguise of a change of name.

This story betrays no knowledge of character, no fine instincts or lofty aspirations, and no profitable study of the American people. It evidently came from the pen of a gross liver, a coarse man, who is more familiar with the interiors of greenrooms and club-houses than respectable people care to be, whose morals were not fashioned in the orthodox school, and whose chief delight consists in filling his mouth with palatable food at Delmonico's. Mr. Yates is about as successful in his attempt to write an American story as the French author of "Uncle Sam," who constructed an American comedy and put Saratoga in the backwoods. Of such books and such plays we have enough and to spare.

It is an unfortunate circumstance for American romance that so many of those who attempt works of fiction paint phases of our social life which are only interesting from their peculiarity. All beauty, all æsthetic culture, all fine work and polish is ignored, and we are hurried through chapter after chapter of ugliness, chaos, fearful crimes, terrible accidents, and strange adventures; or else we are treated to a weakly, religious novel from the Sunday-school standpoint; or to a satire upon the manners, speech, and customs of New-Englanders. Cooper, Irving, Hawthorne, and Dr. O. W. Holmes have added works of permanent interest to American fiction, a statement which can hardly be made of any other known American writer. As specimens of recent American novels, what can be said of John Esten Cooke's "Justin Harley" and Mrs. L. D. Blake's "Fettered for Life?" Mr. Cooke sends romances from the press as fast as his pen and publishers can produce them. He writes in a dashing, easy manner, but after one has followed the stream of words from its source to its ocean, he has had his labor for his pains, with not so much as a sunfish or trout in his basket; without discovering a single shady nook for repose, a solitude for reflection, an outlook for a pleasing prospect. He calls his "Justin Harley" a romance of Old Virginia, and he tells the story of his hero who led a wandering life at home and abroad; who spent freely the hard-earned money of his ancestors, and about whose early life there was a mystery involving the question of his marriage. All the characters in the book are exceedingly commonplace; they never rise above a certain level, for it is vain to expect the fountain to reach higher than its source, and Mr. Cooke is neither a Hugo, a Disraeli, or a George Eliot—he is not even a Bayard Taylor, a Beecher, or a Dr. Holland, and each of these gentlemen has written a story. But for a few novel inci-

dents in the book, such as the loss of a key, a sudden storm and flood, the meeting of a strange woman among a company of strolling actors, etc., "Justin Harley" would be insufferably dull. A portion of the action of the story is in the edge of a great swamp, and here Mr. Cooke appears to be quite at home in his description of scenery and management of storms and moonlight effects, only he introduces them much as the stage-carpenter places his paste-board scenery before an audience, in an exaggerated and unnatural manner, with the intention, evidently, of exciting wonder if not admiration. The book is a profitless one to read, and belongs to a large class of novels which frequently find their way into the Eastern States, from such literary sections of our country as Kentucky, Tennessee, and Mississippi.

Mrs. Blake, in her "Fettered for Life," had a difficult task to perform, inasmuch as she attempted to tell a very commonplace story, and at the same time interest the public in an unpopular movement. Taking a poor girl from the country, and bringing her to the metropolis, the author narrates her adventures and trials in the earnest endeavor which is made to earn an honest livelihood. All through the book the heroine is caused to feel keenly how unfortunate it is to be a woman and come into competition with men in matters of business. She is even exposed to insult and injury from those who occupy high positions, and it is only by marrying a good man at last that she escapes her trials. There is much in this story of real life, and as such it is valuable to all who lack experience and contemplate starting out in the world for themselves. Many good women in the country who read this book will be surprised to learn, for the first time, perhaps, that a woman traveling alone to New York will not be received at many of the hotels, while any man who applies has no difficulty in securing accommodations. Mrs. Blake, in fact, opens up in this book the whole question of granting to women all those social and political privileges which are now denied them. And if anything can help to promote this object, it is books which portray the disadvantages under which woman labors when she attempts to help herself.

It is a promising sign of the times that wide attention is now being called to the subjects of health and education in all their relations to the human family. Before we can have a nation of artists, of scholars, patriots, or even virtuous and honest men, there must be a nation of healthy and robust men and women, beings who know how to live to the best advantage, or in accordance with the laws of nature; for when nature's laws are violated, the action of the brain becomes enfeebled, the physical system weakens, there is a lack of courage, of all strong and well-directed effort, and artificial means are resorted to for the purpose of putting the human machine in working order. In the end these always fail, and disease, crime, misery, poverty, and all the ills to which flesh is heir, come crowding upon the human family, like a plague of grasshoppers, to devour and destroy.

The books now coming from the press on subjects connected with health and education are exceedingly numerous. A valuable one, from the house of D. Appleton & Co., is from the pen of Canon Kingsley, of Westminster, and consists of a number of popular lectures on various subjects which he has delivered in England. He assumes that the modern Briton is degenerating in consequence of his neglect of hygienic laws, and he addresses himself to mothers, for the most part, on such topics as they need to be familiar with before they can properly rear a family of children. His manner is entertaining and his matter is valuable. The book is called "Health and Education."

"Physiology for Practical Use" is another valuable work from the same house, profusely illustrated, and edited by Dr. James Hinton, a distinguished surgeon of London, from a series of papers contributed by gentlemen who had special knowledge of the subjects upon which they wrote. The scope of the work can best be understood when it is known that one chapter relates to the brain and its servants, that a chapter is devoted to each of the five special senses, and that there are other chapters on such subjects as digestion, the skin, the bath, pain, respiration, taking cold, influenza, headache, sleep and sleeplessness, ventilation, the liver, alcohol, occupation and health, training and gymnastics, etc. The volume is a handsome one of over five hundred pages, and can be read and enjoyed by the non-professional reader. It should be transformed into a text-book for all of our common schools.

The essay on "Sex in Mind and in Education," by Henry Maudsley, M. D., of England, has been republished in this city in pamphlet form by James Miller. The English doctor maintains that the sexes are different, which no one denies, and says that "let come what may, it will not be possible to transform a woman into a man," a statement everybody admits. Those who ask that women shall have, if they wish, the same education as men, the same business, political and social privileges, claim that the question of sex ought not to enter into the discussion at all, as it has no more to do with justice and woman's capabilities than the color of the hair or the angle of the nose. It is entirely a work of supererogation for Dr. Maudsley, or any other person, to discuss the subject of education or political duties from the standpoint of sex. As an ingenious argument by one who is familiar with medical topics, "Sex in Mind and Education" may be classed among the curiosities of medical literature.

Dr. J. W. Howe, a young physician of New York City, who has had a large experience in connection with hospital and other practice, has published a book called "Emergencies," which has passed into its second edition, through D. Appleton & Co., and is fast assuming the position of a standard work. The volume includes within its scope all the accidents by fire, flood, and land which may suddenly come upon individuals, and indicates the best treatment to be pursued on the instant. Valuable alike to the layman and the doctor, it has received, as it deserves, the highest praise of the medical press of this country and Europe. It is one of the medical books which should find a place in every household, while its contents should be familiar to every man and woman.

"THE ALDINE PRESS."—JAMES SUTTON & Co., Printers and Publishers, 58 Maiden Lane, N. Y.